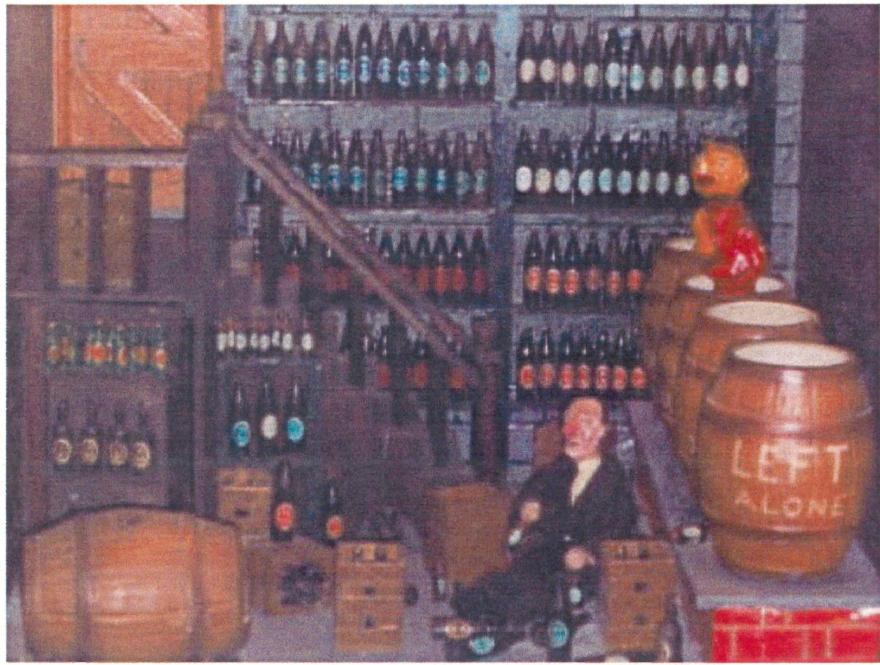


# MECHANICAL MEMORIES MAGAZINE

ISSUE 9

JAN. 2007



**Happy New Year!**

**In this issue:**

**The Bollands survey – an exciting new project for 2007**

# **Mechanical Memories Magazine**

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# Editorial

Hello, and a very happy New Year to you all! I hope you all had a great Christmas and have now sobered-up, gone on a diet and are ready for some slotting in 2007! At the start of each year it's customary to look forward with optimism, leaving behind the previous year which turned out to be crap! Let's hope this year will be a good one for us slotties. Actually, I think 2006 was a fairly good year for slot collectors, and I believe we can build on the successes of the year with justifiable optimism.

So, what did we achieve in 2006? Well, this time last year this magazine was not even in the planning stage. We had been without a publication of this type for some time; many collectors had lost contact with others; some had lost interest, and most would agree that the collecting scene was, at best, stagnant. But now, I think we are in a much better position to look forward with a genuine sense of optimism. I've sort of continued this editorial on the centre pages, so read on.

Following the success of the Coventry auction, I'm hoping that Jeremy and I will be able to present a similar event in March. However, Christmas sort of got in the way of the organisation, so we are now a little short of time. If I can pull a few rabbits out of the hat, I'll have full details next month.

Have you ever wondered how many Bollands working models have survived? This issue sees the start of an exciting new project in which I hope you will all get involved. It is intended to be a long term, on-going project but relies on everyone's support. See page 6

And finally, you'll notice the magazine has shrunk this time (not in size; the number of pages). This is due mainly to a lack of advertising, and I'm rather hoping that when you all get your credit card bills and realise how much you've spent over Christmas, you'll start flogging some machines! And don't forget, a whole page ad. gets posted free of charge on the pennymachines website – all for just £25

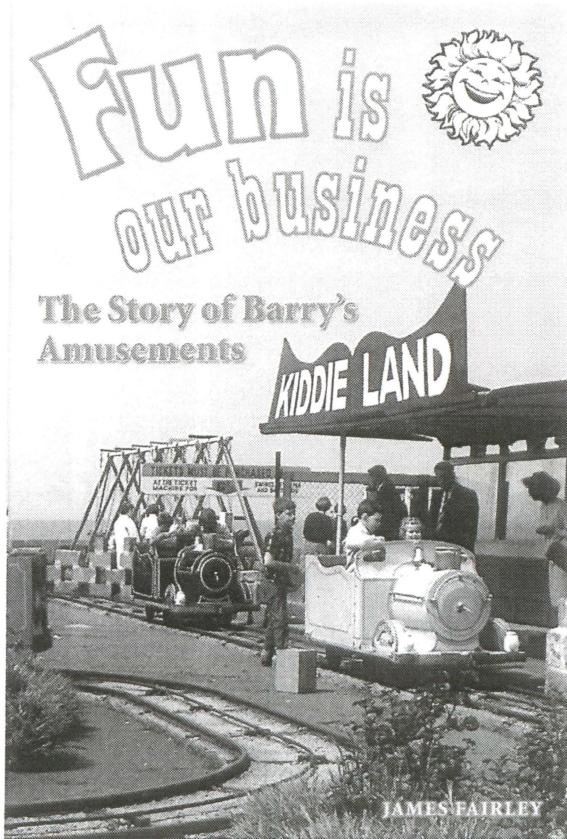
Until next time, all the best

*Jerry*

# Another new book!

It's only a couple of months since Nick Laister's excellent book 'Pennies by the Sea' hit the bookshelves, and now here's another! **Fun is our Business: The Story of Barry's Amusements** by James Fairley. I received my copy just before Christmas, and was instantly impressed with it's large A4 sized, hardback format. With over 250 pages and many wonderful archive photographs, it represents great value for money.

I should stress that the book is not primarily about slot machines, although the final chapter is dedicated to this subject. However, anyone interested in amusement parks, in particular from an historical perspective, will find this a thoroughly enjoyable and well-researched book.



The author relates the story of the Barry family, Ireland's largest amusement operators, and traces the history of it's sites at Portrush; Bangor; Bellevue and Belfast. The family were also promoters and operators of travelling fairground and circus, and for over three decades promoted the wall and globe of death.

The final chapter deals with some of the slot machines that were operated at Barry's Portrush and Bangor sites, and is an extremely interesting read. Much of the text comes from the author's childhood memories and anecdotes from past employees, with some interesting stories about cheating and fiddling machines. However, the author has succumbed to that old wives tale with regard to predicting winning lines on one-armed bandits, with stories of employees distracting players or pushing them out of the way when the jackpot was imminent in order to play the machine themselves, and thus reap the reward.....sorry, I don't believe it!

The author describes many of the machines that were operated over the years, all of which will be familiar to readers of this magazine, except perhaps one: the coin-operated chip frying machine, which apparently (due to it's unreliability) was not a huge success! This chapter is supported by a good number of pictures of the machines mentioned in the text, although many of the pictures seem to be from Carter's arcade and are no doubt intended to be merely illustrative.

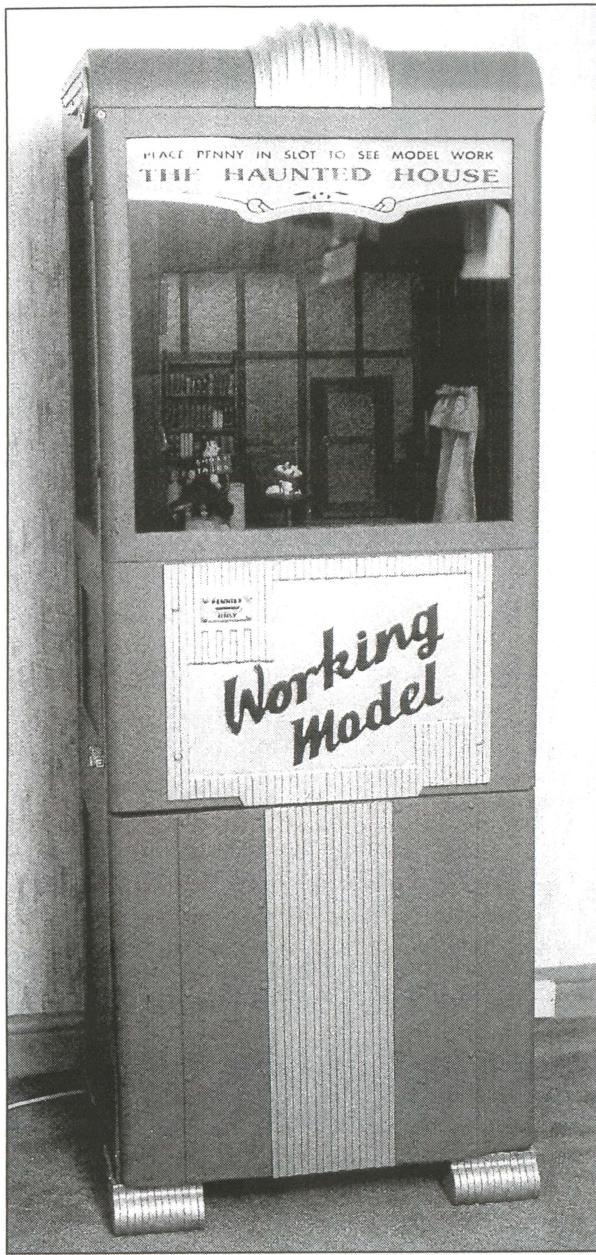
However, of equal interest is reference in a previous chapter to Barry's entry into coin-op. manufacture, (and if you're interested in politics, the reason for doing so is equally interesting). In 1966, the Labour government created the 'Selective Employment Tax', which was intended to stimulate a transfer of workers from service industries to manufacturing. Businesses were taxed on the number of employees who could be classified as being in service, but not on those in manufacturing. In order to circumvent the tax, at least for many of it's full time employees, Barry's commenced manufacture of slot machines during the winter months. The author describes a 'Speak Your Fortune' machine, which sounds rather like an improved version of Streets 'Telefortune', and a 'Test Your Strength' machine, where the player was required to push together two Bull's horns, the force being registered on a scale. Sound familiar? This arm of the business traded as Barry's Manufacturing Co., Portrush, and must have been a fairly large operation, as they apparently exhibited at trade exhibitions and exported their machines. So it would appear the author has brought to light a previously unknown slot manufacturer. Has anyone heard of Barry's Manufacturing Co., Portrush? I've certainly encountered several 1960s/70s strength testers with Bull's horns, which I recollect may have been distributed by Samson, but I could be wrong. Could these be Barry's machines?

The book is priced £16.99 plus £1.69 p&p and can be ordered direct from the publishers:

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Highly Recommended!



*A fine example of a Bollands' Haunted House, housed in one of the nicer (and quite sought-after) Exhibit Supply crane cases. Photo courtesy Darren Hesketh.*

# Bollands Working Models

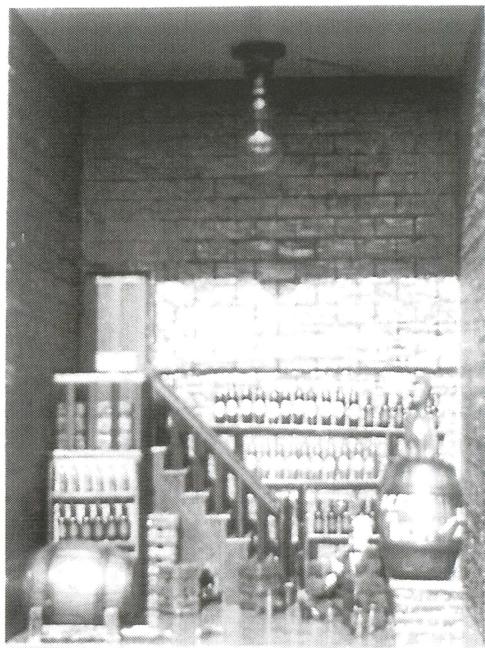
Do you remember way back in issue 2, in the feature on Steve Maxted's collection at Rye, I said, "I shall not go into too much detail here about Bollands' machines, as I have something planned for the next issue"? Well, eight months later I've finally got the space to include what I'd intended for the June issue last year. Sorry it's late!

From the 1920s and throughout the 1930s, Fredrick Bolland ran the highly successful *Bolland's Amusement Machine Supply Co. Ltd*, supplying a large range of machines to the automatics industry. The company was also engaged in repair and conversion work, and in the manufacture of its own machines, in particular, wall-mounted fortune telling machines. At the outbreak of WWII, Fred ceased trading and moved to Wales, where he operated an amusement arcade, by all accounts very successfully. However, after the war he returned to London to recommence trading, but now joined by his younger brother Arthur. It is likely that it was Arthur who was the driving force behind the direction the business would take, and continue for a quarter of a century: manufacture; supply and operating working models.

Early makers such as the Dennisons and the Lees built working models in fairly small numbers as 'one offs', generally earning a living from operating rather than selling them. During the 1920s and 30s, Charles Ahrens produced a small range of models, but in larger numbers, probably incorporating a small element of mass production in their manufacture. However, it was the Bollands who were to do for the working model, what Henry Ford did for the motor car (in relative terms). It is thought that over four hundred machines were produced from the late 1940s to the mid '70s; an output that probably represents at least half of the total number of working models ever produced.

After the war, arcade operators throughout the country found that their (largely American imported) cranes from the pre war years were rendered redundant, due to sweet rationing. It was Arthur's idea to convert these cranes into working models, utilising the existing cam mechanisms for the movements. So Fred started to acquire as many cranes as possible, and supplied them to Arthur for conversion. Arthur's ingenuity in creating his models is truly amazing, particularly some of the movements, bearing in mind that the cranes operated on only three cams. He devised all the model designs, layouts and movements, and built each model as an individual machine, although using many mass-produced parts. His wife helped by dressing the figures and making such things as curtains, and his son (Arthur Jnr) assisted by painting such things as the labels on the beer bottles in the *Drunkard's Dream*.

Fred retired in 1961, but Arthur continued building and operating machines. It was about this time that the supply of crane cases started to dry up, as arcade operators were now able to obtain swag for the cranes, and were once again able to use them for the purpose for which they were intended! So Arthur built his own cases, including the mechanisms. These later scratch built cases are very distinctive, and can be instantly



recognised by the clown's head on the top front of the case, although no one that I've ever spoken to seem to know why this feature was included, or it's significance.

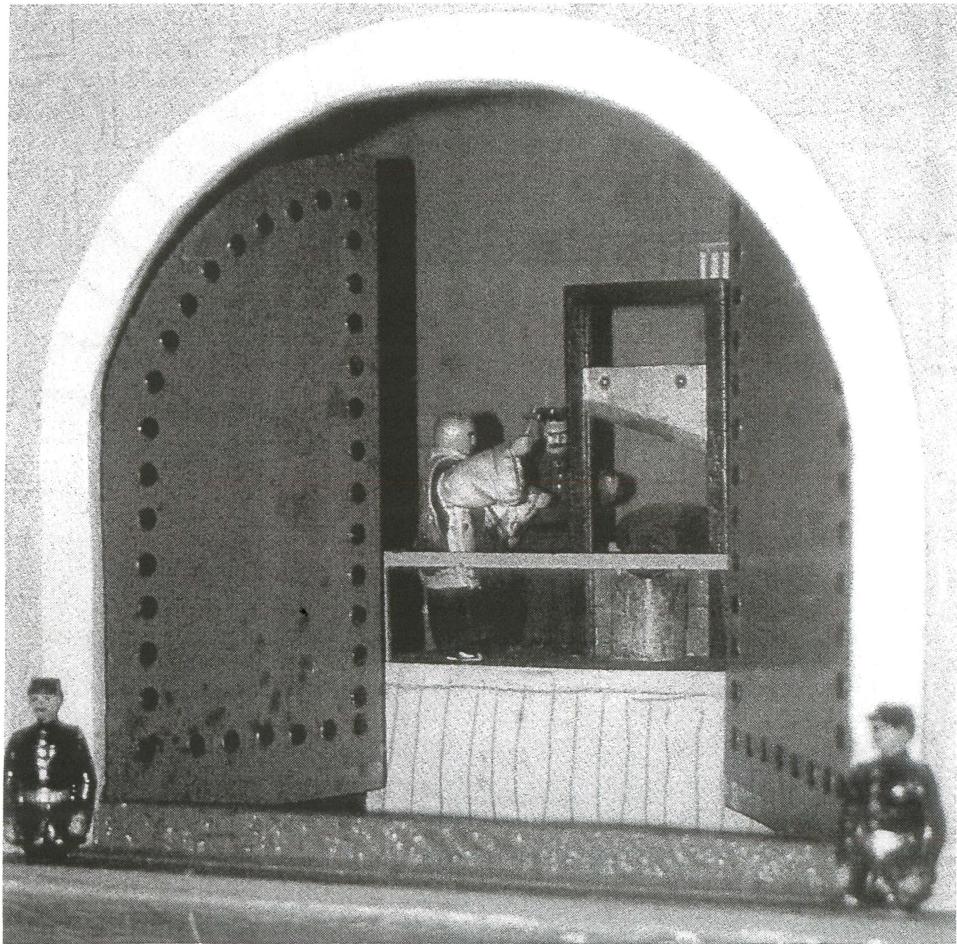
The subject matter in Arthur's models was both varied and inventive, and often of a comic nature. Although there is nothing comical about death scenes, such as English and French executions, a small number of this type of model were produced, although they were probably not as popular as this subject had been in earlier times. However, other tried and tested tableau such as *The Haunted House* and *Haunted Churchyard* were produced in large numbers, and these two in particular are common survivors. Arthur also came up with new, and sometimes surreal subjects such as: *The Burglar* and *Davy Jones' Locker*, and over the years produced many different machines on the Egyptian theme, one of his favourite subjects.



**Above:** An impressive collection of Bollands' working models at Chessington Zoo

**Opposite page:** Detail of *The Drunkard's Dream*, probably the most common survivor, and three much rarer models: *Egypt*; *Hell's Kitchen* and *The Witch's Cave*. All pictures are ex Chessington Zoo c.1950s or 60s. Chessington Zoo was one of Fred's sites, where he operated working models and other machines very successfully for many years.

How many Bollands' working models have survived, and how many of each different machine? Well, I don't know; and neither does anyone else! I remember talking to someone a few years ago on this subject, and we both agreed it would be a great idea to compile some kind of register, listing every surviving Bollands' machine. At the time there would have been no practical means of achieving this, but now this magazine could be the vehicle for collecting enough information in order to compile a fairly comprehensive list. I'm hoping too, that we may be able to do something in conjunction with the pennymachines website, although at the time of writing I haven't yet spoken to the host of the site, so it could come as a shock when he reads this!



*The Guillotine, thought to be the very first working model produced by the Bollands. Unlike its successors, this is housed in a scratch built case, rather than a crane.*

# The Survey!

So here's the plan! If you own a Bollands' working model (or several), let me have as much information as you can, including photographs if possible. We have no means of dating machines other than the case in which it's housed, so I shall need to know whether it's a crane conversion or in a 'clown' case (which dates it 1960s onward). It would also be interesting to know what type of cranes were used. Every Bollands crane conversion I have ever seen has been built from an Exhibit Supply Co. machine, but are there any others out there that have used cranes from other makers, say Buckley for instance? And even if you don't own a machine, let me have information on any that you know of. We all know of maybe just one machine or maybe several dozen; but they're not necessarily the same machines! So let me have as much information as possible. Owner's anonymity will of course be respected, although I shall need to know owner's identities in order that details are not duplicated.

I've started a list below, and it should be noted that although there are many other machines that I've encountered over the years, I've only listed the machines that I can account for at this moment in time. As we all know, limited information can be misleading, and you will note that the same number of Hell's Kitchens are listed as Haunted Houses. Hell's Kitchen is an extremely rare machine, and as far as I am aware only three exist. It just happens that I know the whereabouts of them all, one of which is in America. On the other hand, if it turns out that only three Haunted Houses exist, I shall offer this magazine to every subscriber free of charge, forever!

Title	No.
Burglar	3
Davy Jones Locker	1
Drunkards Dream	4
Haunted Churchyard	4
Haunted House	3
Hells Kitchen	3
Miser	2
Night Watchman	4
Pharos	4
Witch's Cave	1

(Front cover picture: Drunkard's Dream, courtesy Tony Atkins)

# Vintage Slot Collecting – the future

In last month's editorial, following the Coventry auction, I stated that I believe there are a number of issues worthy of debate. Actually, there is probably just one: the lack of newcomers taking an interest in our hobby. Let's cut to the chase, and consider the worse case scenario. If the situation does not improve, then in say twenty years time, many of us will be proud owners of worthless collections (and many of us will be dead)! Now, before you all douse yourselves with petrol and reach for the Bryant & Mays, that IS the worst case scenario and things needn't get that bad. But you'll see the point: it's a simple matter of supply and demand, and if through a lack of newcomers there is little demand, then in years to come our machines will be unwanted and worthless. Ironically, our unwanted machines could end up in skips and on bonfires just as so many did thirty or forty years ago; which is one of the reasons we started collecting in the first place!

So, are there newcomers joining us? Yes, I know several who are subscribers to this magazine and are very much 'hooked'. Unfortunately, they're not (with respect) exactly young! And here lies the root of the problem: we need younger blood; new collectors who will continue after many of us have retired to that great arcade in the sky! As I mentioned last month, it all comes down to nostalgia, which I firmly believe is why the vast majority of us collect vintage slot machines: fond childhood memories. But we now have a generation of adults (and their children) who do not remember the machines we collect, and don't even remember pre-decimal currency.

However, before I continue with the newcomers bit, what about the established collector community? Well, the situation hasn't been entirely ideal here either. It's now been three years since the demise of the Antique Amusement magazine; a vehicle which almost single-handedly kept the community together, and will have done much to attract and encourage newcomers. The fact that there is a 'slottie community' at all, is due in considerable measure to Steve's work over many years. Unfortunately, it's a fact of life that what takes years to do, takes very little time to undo. As a result, the collecting scene became depressed for a couple of years, which is one of the reasons I started this magazine. Many collectors lost touch with others, particularly those without Internet access, and many completely lost interest. In that sort of stagnant environment, we were hardly likely to attract newcomers – of any age!

Now, there is some good news here! A good number of collectors have told me that, as a result of this magazine, their interest has been rekindled. The Coventry auction last November reminded many of the 'good old days', and there seems to be a clear consensus that with continued efforts, the slottie community can and will pull itself back together again, and thus be in a better position to attract newcomers.

I have given much consideration to ways of developing and maintaining interest through this magazine, and have come up with two ideas. The first is fairly obvious, and didn't take a great amount of rocket science! The response from the Coventry auction was overwhelmingly positive, and clearly we need to build on this with regular events. Jeremy and I have established a good working relationship, and I am confident we are

# ure?

now in a position to continue forward with, hopefully, two events this year. However, I believe we need to go in a slightly different direction, and develop a different format from that to which we had all become accustomed a few years back. I firmly believe that the days of auctions with three, four or even five hundred lots are over. Everyone I've spoken to thoroughly enjoyed the social atmosphere of the Coventry event, and there seems to be a consensus that this is the way forward. So I want to move more toward a 'show' with an auction, rather than just an auction. As I've stated on page 3, I'm hoping we'll be able to organise something for March. Fingers crossed!

The second plan is a number of projects; something with which everyone can be involved, and which I hope we will be able to do in partnership with the pennymachines website. The Bollands survey will, of course, not be of interest to everyone, but if we can come up with three or four similar projects during the course of the year, there's bound to be something to suit all interests.

So, where does this leave us with regard to encouraging newcomers into the world of vintage slot collecting? Well, as I stated earlier, things have been somewhat stagnant for a couple of years, but if the community can show interest and enthusiasm, then we're more likely to attract interest from outsiders. And if we can develop our events more as shows, rather than purely auctions, and advertise locally thus encouraging interest from the public, then this can only help. However, there still remains the problem of encouraging younger collectors (or potential collectors). One thing is for sure, children enjoy our machines, and I often wonder, watching the kids that come in and play the machines at Brighton, whether these could be the collectors of the future? At least every child who plays the machines goes away knowing what an old penny looks like, and what to do with an allwin; and that can't be bad!

And finally, do you remember how this topic started last month? It was the final confirmation and acceptance that prices have dropped. Is this a bad thing? On the whole, I think not. Unless you're planning to flog your entire collection, I do not believe that high prices are of any benefit to anyone, and certainly not to the hobby in general. Most would agree that prices reached an unrealistically high level a few years back, and that we're now likely to see a period of stability. Those who get upset about a fall in prices, tend to be those who buy in order to make a quick profit; and frankly, that's not what collecting is about. And surely, lower prices are more likely to encourage newcomers, and that has to be good for us all.

Happy slotting in 2007

# Vintage Funfair

## A nostalgic look back at the fairs of yesterday

By Johnny Burley

As we look at the fairgrounds of a bygone era, I hope you will allow me to indulge in a few personal memories along the way. In the present age of theme parks, with the ever increasing demand for modern white-knuckle rides, the survival of the travelling fair is under much pressure. They survive only by adapting to change, which is a great pity as much of the character and atmosphere has been left behind. Today's fairgrounds, with their modernistic designs, clad in fibreglass and sheet plastic, look very bland compared to the old time vintage fairs I remember in my youth. They were rich in colour and tradition, with roundstalls; sideshow frontages; pillars, steps and signs. The rides too, having ornate woodcarving and painted artwork, all bore the hallmark of artistry unique to the vintage fair. Magnificent work by the likes of Orton and Spooner, Savages and others, whose work is now much sought after by collectors, from a time when pleasures were more simple, and the travelling fair brought magic to young and old alike.

The largest fairground site I have seen was when on a trip to the U.S.A. in the 1970s. I visited the Tennessee State fair, reached by a Greyhound bus from Memphis. They still had a traditional 'midway', being a central avenue of sideshows. The sheer size and range of amusements was awesome.

Rides that have stood the test of time include: Dodgems (personal favourites); Waltzer; Ferris Wheels, and many showmen still travel ancient sets of Gallopers, passed down through generations of fairground families. But rarely seen, or gone forever, are the Gondolas; Skid; Popeye; Moonshot; Cakewalk; Noah's Ark; Caterpillar; Overboats and Wall of Death. Gone are the Freak shows, such as the Snake Girl; Three Headed Midget; Leopard Man; Tattooed Lady; the amazing Gill Monster (half man, half Lizard). And of course, the legendary boxing booths, where men like the late ex-British champion Freddie Mills and others, started on the bottom rung of the ladder on their climb to sporting fame, taking on the town's hardmen for a tenner a night.

A big thrill for me as a boy was seeing the 'pull-on', the arrival of the fair. Watching the showmen manoeuvring those mighty old Scammel trucks, hauling a line of fun-filled trailers onto the boggy local parkland or recreation ground. Later, when in my teens, I worked many of the local Derby fairs for the late Tom Jervis (the 3<sup>rd</sup>) and his wife Clara. Originally from the old Midlands based Jervis family of showmen, on marrying Clara, who was a member of the Nottingham based Proctor family, he worked and travelled the East Midlands section. At that time, his two main rides were an Orton and Spooner Dodgem and an old Ark, which he later traded for a Jackson built Waltzer. He considered me a good 'Gaff lad' and I worked on them all. Clara would always be seated in the Dodgem track paybooth, controlling the fair's record deck, while Tom

would be in the centre paybooth of the Waltzer, never without his battered old trilby hat, collarless shirt and braces; the stub of a Woodbine between his lips, and an old watch and chain hanging from his waistcoat. Tom was a workaholic, a chain-smoker, very clever engineer and a true showman to the bone.

These were the 1950s, when many travelling fairground families still used the traditional living vans. So let's picture the scene back then, midway through a hot summer's night under a darkening sky, taking in the sights, sounds and smells of the true fairground. The smartly painted and lined living vans set around the perimeter, along with the empty trailers (awaiting the next 'pull-off'); the noise from the generators providing lifeblood to the rides and hundreds of coloured bulbs lighting up the night sky. The sound of rock 'n' roll music in the airwaves, and the screams of young girls riding the Waltzer. Shouts from the sideshow barkers, and shots ringing out from the sidestall rifle ranges. Add too, the unique smell of the fair, being a mixture of oil and grease; generator fumes; toffee apples; candyfloss; hot dogs; brandy snaps and popcorn all rolled into one. This was true vintage fair, with an atmosphere all of it's own. The names of famous showmen's families live on, but the traditional travelling fair has changed forever.



*Building-up Tom Jarvis' Orton and Spooner Dodgem track, sometime in the 1950s*

# How I started my collection

By Alwyn Brice

I don't know if four machines constitute a collection but my wife feels that this is more than enough....

As a youngster, I used to go to Ramsgate a lot, for occasional days out and for longer holidays. I recall the arcades of the 1960s but couldn't tell you what was in them. Pennies were precious commodities in those days and I always longed to put some into a machine that had a number of cups: losing looked to be impossible! My father knew better, and forbade such recklessness, so monies usually ended up in the coin pushers. One summer, after returning home, I even tried to make a rudimentary coin pusher from an old shoebox.

Many years later, I visited a fellow in Chatham to buy a classic car (an Austin Metropolitan, actually) and I noticed a spiral ball game hanging up in his hall. "You should get one of those," he said, "it's an Allwin, like your name."

The idea took root and a good few years after that, whilst researching an article on slot machines, I ran across Jez Darvill. He was a mine of information and his collection inspired me to look out for an Elevenses. One duly turned up on that time-honoured marketplace for the obscure, E-Bay, and I was lucky enough to win it. The machine was way up north but I did manage to meet the seller in a lay-by after hours of driving. Imagine my disappointment when the "presentable example" transpired to have a weak mechanism, a poor backflash and a somewhat scruffy case. You learn quickly when buying from photographs.

Anyhow, back at base Jez said that he'd take the machine as a part-exchange since he'd just finished restoring some Bryans machines for a show. Thus I ended up with a Tencup and a Fivewin on old penny play (what else?), which gave me the best of both worlds. Not too long afterwards I began to get a yearning (something readers will be familiar with, I guess) for something different. Our house had been extended, which gave me some extra space, so...

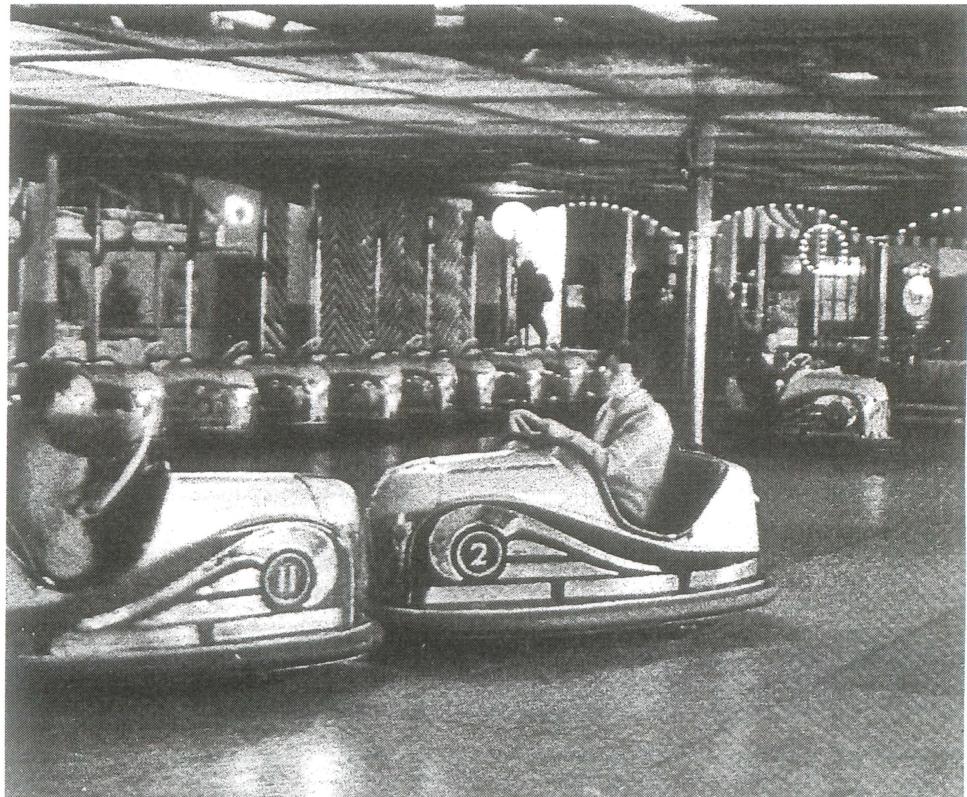
I'd played on Jez's Retreeva and Trickler (the latter I adore – has any reader got one for sale/swap?) and he happened to have a couple of Payramids, one early, one late. The 1960s example was superb: it was untouched, with three lots of matching serial numbers. Moreover, and somewhat anoraky, I admit, it had a frosted area of glass just above the catchers, the work of years and years of play and thousands of balls chinking gently against the glass.

With the Payramid, I thought that my collection was complete. But then Jez's Trickler came up for sale: sadly, I couldn't justify the price, so I had to pass it by. It's a memory that haunts me still. However, more recently, I saw a Bonzini and Sopransi 1930s crane advertised by Pete Barson. As a lover of all things French, I had to take a look at this item, since I remembered their tantalising behaviour from childhood. (This

company and its products I'm actually researching at present, with a view to writing an article in 2007, so watch this space). Anyhow, in all, three of these 1930s cranes were for sale at the same time, so I viewed them all before buying Pete's. I love its Art Deco features, the carved mahogany case and the French approach to the business, which differs from the US versions. When it first arrived, my wife drew parallels between it and the Tardis but she's more used to it now. Oh, and the children adore it, too. Which is why, of course, we collect these things in the first place – isn't it?

Alwyn Brice

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*As I have some spare space here, I couldn't resist printing this great picture from James Fairley's new book, of the Supercar dodgems at Portrush taken sometime between 1945 and 1955. Those were the days when dodgem cars looked like dodgem cars!*

**Lineage ads.** are free to subscribers and will run for two issues, unless you instruct me otherwise. Please ensure I have your ads. by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month for inclusion in the next month's issue. Remember to include your telephone number and the area where you live. Post or e-mail to the address on page 2

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Bollands Working Models

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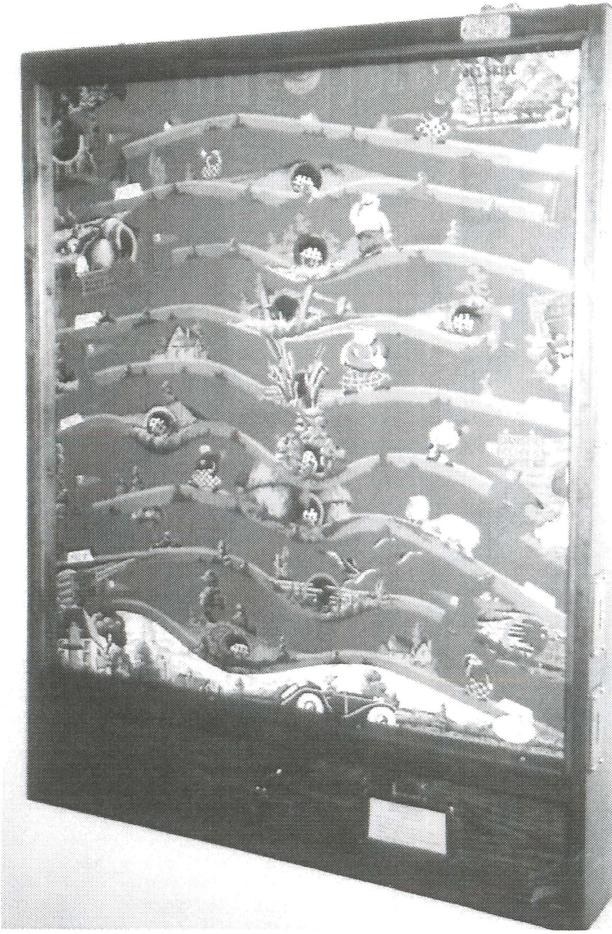
hand written in green ink.

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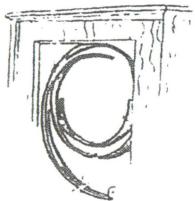
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# For Sale



*Nine Hole Golf Tap-a-Penny Game  
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*01202 671336*



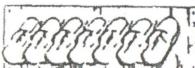
## ALLWIN TRACK

Grooved & chromed just like the original.

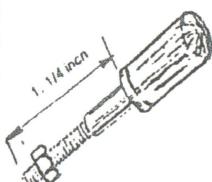
*Inner* with flat & nipple  
17 $\frac{1}{4}$ " inside length  
*Middle* 18" inside length  
*Outer* 40" inside length



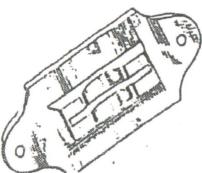
Win Tabs Red printed  
on Silver foil sticky  
backed 12 on a sheet



CHROMED 7 ball win  
gallery. 6 x 1.9/16

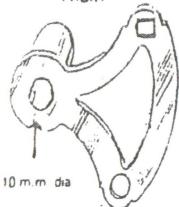


CHROMED THUMB  
STOP

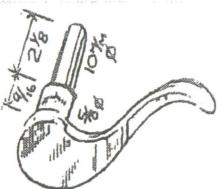


COIN SLOT  
to suit 2p but can  
be filed bigger

### CHROMED TRIGGER FRONT



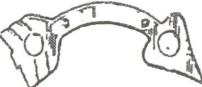
10 mm dia



TRIGGER



CHROMED ARROWS  
Reversible.

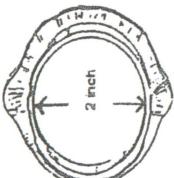


### CHROMED PAYOUT BOWL

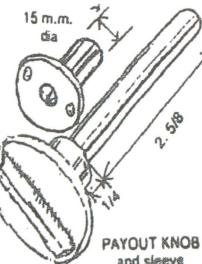


2 5/8 inch dia cup 2 x 0.25 inch fixing  
squares at 3.75 inch centres.

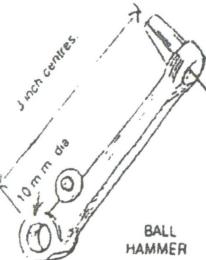
### CHROMED KNOB SHIELD



2 x tapped M5 fixing holes on  
extended nipples 2.1/2 centres.

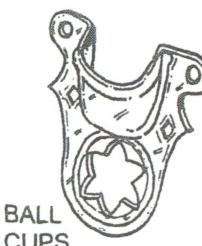


PAYOUT KNOB  
and sleeve



BALL  
HAMMER

### SPANDRELLS



BALL  
CUPS

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